

A. BELIEVE

- Scripture says Abraham is the father of us who believe because he believed God and His Word. God counted him righteous because of his faith. (Gen 15:6)
- He was famous for having waited on God to fulfill His promise for an extremely long period of time. We can gain several insights on how to wait well from his life: Romans 4:16b- 21 NLT-- Abraham is the father of all who believe. ¹⁷ That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing. ¹⁸ Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, "That's how many descendants you will have!" ¹⁹ And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah's womb. ²⁰ Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹ He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.
- This account of Abraham's life portrays him as a man of faith who believed God despite the fact that his circumstances were contrary to the promise.
- Looking a little more closely at what happened in the middle ground between the promise and its fulfillment, we see Abraham's humanity showing through.
- The father of our faith, over the course of time, displayed erratic faith:
 - He followed God's instruction to move to the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1-7)
 - Famine in Canaan drove him to Egypt. There he deceived Pharaoh by saying that Sarah was his sister not his wife. God rescued Sarah and put them back on track. (Gen 12:10-20)
 - When he returned to Canaan, God spoke to him and promised that this land would be the permanent possession of his descendants. Abe built an altar there. (Gen 13:14-18)
 - Later he doubted God's Word: "What good are all Your blessings when I don't even have a son?" God told him his offspring would outnumber the stars in the sky. (Gen 15:2, 5)
 - In that same encounter, God told him that He would give him the land of Canaan. Again, Abe questioned: "How can I be sure that I will actually possess it?" (Gen 15:8)
 - At age 86 Abraham took the servant Hagar as a wife. Their son Ishmael was the product of impatience and blaming God for not keeping His promise. (Gen 16)
 - At age 99, the Lord revealed Himself as El Shaddai, God Almighty. Abraham decided to obey and be circumcised as a sign of entering the covenant with the Lord. (Gen 17)
 - Even though it must have felt humiliating at times, Abraham agreed to be called both Abram ("exalted father") and then Abraham ("father of many"). (Gen 17:5)
- At times, Abraham let his circumstances and his feelings hinder him from consistently believing God. Yet even his small faith was enough for God: Gen 18:19 NLT--I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised."
- God summarizes Abraham's life by saying this: Rom 4:17 NLT-- Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing
- We can be encouraged even when our belief level fluctuates. Jesus valued faith of any size: Mt 17:20--If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.
- One way to overcome the feelings that seem to hijack our faith is to express and own them. We don't stay there but make the choice to believe what God says instead. See "Tools & Techniques: I Feel but God Says" to practice this strategy.
- Insights:

B. ENDURE

- “Twenty-five years. Three hundred months. One thousand three hundred weeks. Nine thousand one hundred twenty-five days. That’s how long Abraham waited between hearing God’s promise and holding his son.” (Scott Hubbard, Gen 12:4; 21:5)
- Time can take its toll on us when we are waiting. We can see this in the life of Abraham as he waited on his promised son – he had doubts and took detours.
- Yet day after day, month after month, and year after year, as he watched his body get older, he continued to hold onto faith in God’s promise. Abraham endured!
- Scripture gives us many exhortations to wait on God with patient endurance:
 - Col 1:11 NLT-- We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy
 - Gal 6:9 NIV-- Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.
 - Lk 21:19 MSG-- Staying with it—that’s what is required. Stay with it to the end. You won’t be sorry
 - Heb 10:36 NLT-- Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God’s will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.
- God says of Abraham that he continued to hope when there was no reason to hope, earthly speaking. He expected God’s goodness, because He believed what God had spoken to him.
- The bible says that Abraham and Sarah were barren. Barren means lacking offspring, crops, vegetation, life or vitality; the state of being unproductive.
- LISTENING EXERCISE

Think about the areas of your life that you are waiting.

Name the ones where you continue to hope and are experiencing God’s goodness:

Name the ones where they look and feel barren, where fruitfulness is lacking:

Lord, we ask that You revive us in the places where we have become lifeless, fruitless, and hopeless as we look to You to bring the patient endurance that we need so much!

- *In our barren places, how do we gain the patient endurance we need to keep on hoping?*
 - We can appropriate it, asking God to “make it true” of us: Heb 13:20-21—Now may the God of peace... equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him
 - Make the choice to submit to God’s will and timing: Heb 12:11 JBP-- When it is all over, we can see that it has quietly produced the fruit of real goodness in the characters of those who have accepted it in the right spirit. So, take a fresh grip on life and brace your trembling limbs. Don’t wander away from the path but forge steadily onward.
 - Let God and knowing Him be the central object of our waiting: Ps 37:7-- Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently **for Him** (*emphasis mine*)
- Insights:

C. GROW

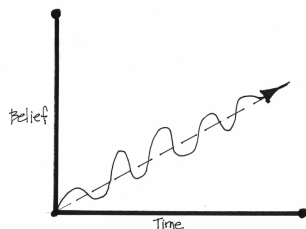
- During this long waiting period in Abraham's life, his faith life did not become barren. In fact, God's Word says that "his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God." (Rom 4:20)
- Even though Abraham had times when his faith was small and stretched very thin, he eventually came to be "fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises." (v. 21)
- Abraham had many personal encounters with God. Time in God's presence, communing with Him, was transformative for Abraham and it can transform us: 2 Cor 3:18 NLT-- We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
- The personal encounters were set apart times where God spoke to Abraham, infusing him with vision and purpose and identity. Abraham responded by building altars to the Lord.
- Altars are traditionally made of stone or other hard materials. Like Abraham, we can build altars when we bring the hard things in our lives to God and pour out our lives as an offering.
- Despite beginning his journey with little knowledge of God and weak faith, God used the waiting in Abraham's life to forge in him a heart that chose to believe no matter what.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:

How would it feel to have it said of you that your life brought glory to God?

Are you willing to bring the hard things in your life to God so that He can transform you?

Will you set your course to follow God to unknown places, to work to believe Him and to eventually become fully convinced of His Word?

Would you like your faith journey to look like this?



- May you find in Abraham's story encouragement to press on in your journey to wait on God and to know Him more and more!

